

MEMORANDUM FOR:

NIO/N & NIO/USSR-EE

Herewith Cochran's suggested topics for your monthly warning meeting on Afghanistan. You are, of course, free not to use them or make use of them in any way you chose.

Richard Lehman
NIO for Warning

Attachment

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NIO/NESA

Herewith Cochran's notes on other potential problems within your area.

Richard Lehman
NIO for Warning

Attachment

Date 13 July 1979

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NESA Suggested Warning Topics

Iran-Iraq

Tensions seem to have eased somewhat since late June, but the continuing inability of central authorities in Tehran to exercise control, particularly in sensitive provinces bordering Iraq, could lead to sudden incidents with a potential for rapid escalation.

Khuzestan remains the potentially most explosive area, with the Arabs threatening to carry out a strike against the oil industry if their demands for autonomy are not satisfied. Note two acts of sabotage in the first week of July by the "Black Wednesday" group.

—What role is the Arab "Rejection Front" playing within Iran and in the tension between Iran and Iraq? Note the report that the PFLP and two allied groups have sent between 200 and 300 Palestinians into Iran and that the Baghdad government is not fully aware of PFLP's cross-border operations into Iran.

—What are PFLP objectives in Khuzestan and how do they relate to PFLP's relationship with the PJO in Iran and to the PFLP's broader ambitions in the Arab-Israeli context?

Israel-Syria

1. The chances of military escalation appear to have increased sharply since late June.

—Assad has not backed off following the 27 June air clash. Syrian jets as recently as 10 July continued to react to Israeli overflights of southern Lebanon and MIG-21s fired air-to-air missiles on 2 and 10 July.

—Israeli ground forces and Lebanese Christian militia have intensified their operations into UNIFIL's area of responsibility.

—Begin contends that Israel has a legitimate right to defend itself by attacking Palestinian bases in Lebanon.

Is Assad underestimating the risks of his present course of action? How would the Israelis react if the Syrians manage to down Israeli aircraft with air to air missiles or SA-6 SAMs?

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--If further air clashes occur, will Assad be willing or able to pay the political costs of a retreat? Or will he escalate by deploying his SA-6s south? Weizman has warned that the IDF would "neutralize them."

3. What are the domestic implications of Assad's decision to challenge Israeli overflights? His concern about the deterioration of his power position was reflected in the withdrawal of some 5000 troops from northern Lebanon to Aleppo and Damascus in late June. Why did he decide to accept high risks of a confrontation with Israel at a time when his domestic position seems significantly more vulnerable? Is Assad, under the pressure of domestic difficulties, in danger of losing control over his policy in Lebanon and toward Israeli actions there? In other words, is the decision to challenge Israeli overflights the product of a carefully calculated scenario or a manifestation of improvisation under heavy domestic pressure?

4. Beyond the declared purpose of preempting Palestinian attacks, what are Israeli objectives in escalating military pressures in southern Lebanon? Is the Begin government moving toward the establishment of a "security" frontier on the Litani? Is it seeking to harass and force the withdrawal of UNIFIL? Is it deliberately provoking confrontations with the PLO and Syrians as a means of insuring that no Palestinians will join the autonomy negotiations and of reinforcing the estrangement between Egypt and its former "moderate" allies, Jordan and Saudi Arabia?

--Note widespread conjecture that Israel will soon launch a major offensive in southern Lebanon.

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The Yemens

With the August "deadline" on union approaching, what are the prospects for surprise actions by one or both of the Yemens? Has the situation been made more uncertain and subject to surprise actions by the weakening authority of both Chairman Ismail and President Salih?

What are the short-term implications of the increase in Iraqi influence in YAR? Might the PDRY perception of growing Iraqi and Baathist influence in Sana lead to preemptive actions?

Would a new round of hostilities in the next 90 days be likely to follow the February-March scenario, or have intervening events increased the likelihood of a more aggressive and direct PDRY military role, as opposed to National Democratic Front activity in southern YAR?